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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000837

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRS](#) [PBTS](#) [PINR](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAIT: "WE'VE DONE OUR PART; BALL IS NOW IN IRAQI COURT"

REF: A. KUWAIT 0283

[¶](#)B. KUWAIT 0808

Classified By: A/POLCHIEF Thomas M. Rosenberger for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

[¶](#)1. (C) Former NEA DAS and newly minted Senior Advisor on Southern Iraq Affairs Gordon Gray met with GOK officials July 22 to discuss Iraq and how to facilitate progress on some of the outstanding issues between Kuwait and Iraq. In direct correlation to Kuwait's proximity to Iran, Kuwaiti paranoia rises when rhetoric between the US and Iran escalates, but USG attendance at the P5 1 talks in Geneva and the rumored opening of a US Interests Section in Tehran have calmed the waters for now. Iraqi PM Al-Maliki still enjoys Kuwaiti approval for his March crackdown on Shi'a militias and Kuwaitis, in their own way, are reaching out to Iraqis, hosting visits to support the Sahwa (Awakenings) and moderation efforts in Iraq. The GOK remains frustrated by perceived GOI dysfunctionality and foot dragging, and told Gray that Kuwait has done and is ready to do its part in moving border projects of mutual benefit along, such as establishing a more efficient customs facility, relocating border encroaching Iraqi farms, and maintaining border demarcation pillars. Gray was also informed that Kuwaiti Ambassador-designate LTG Ali Al-Mou'min may take up his posting in Baghdad in October, "sometime after Ramadan." End summary.

July 22 Gordon Gray/GOK Meetings

[¶](#)2. (U) Former NEA DAS and new Senior Advisor on Southern Iraq Affairs Gordon Gray met with GOK officials July 22 to discuss Iraq and how to facilitate progress on some of the outstanding issues between Kuwait and Iraq. GOK officials warmly welcomed the visit and Gray's new assignment and expressed hope that his shuttling between Baghdad and Kuwait will elicit more cooperation and efficiency in the Kuwait-Iraq relationship. GOK officials that he met included: MFA's Americas Department Director, Ambassador Ali Al-Sammak; Follow-up and Coordination Director, Ambassador Khaled Al-Muqamis; Asia Director, Ambassador Mohammed Al-Bader; and National Security Bureau (NSB) Deputy Director Shaykh Thamer Ali Al Sabah.

Iran Militarily and Environmentally a Threat to Kuwait

[¶](#)3. (C) Ambassador Al-Bader expressed encouragement and relief at perceived recent progress in closing the rift between the USG and the Iranian regime, noting in particular, the inclusion of U/S Bill Burns at the P5 1 talks in Geneva,

and Iran's agreement in principle to the opening of a US Interests Section in Tehran. However, pointing to the precarious positioning of Kuwait geographically, Al-Bader, while defending Iran's right to pursue peaceful nuclear energy, voiced his concerns over Iran's nuclear ambition mainly in terms of the environmental threat it poses, stressing the close proximity of the Bushehr nuclear reactor (120km from Kuwait City) and his distrust in the Russian technology that built it.

NSB Promoting "Real Iraqis"

¶4. (C) Shaykh Thamer, usually prone to grandstanding and ranting against the USG (ref A), updated Gray on NSB activities to counter Iranian infiltration, which included work with "real Iraqis," as opposed to "US cronies like Chalabi and Allawi," saying that NSB has recently met with Iraqi Sahwa (Awakening) Congress leader Shaykh Ahmad Abu Risha and Dr. Ahmed Abdulghaffar Al-Samerai (who recently visited Kuwait officials at the Moderation center--Kuwait's project aimed at preventing terrorism by indoctrinating fringe Imams on moderate versions of Islam). Thamer called for more and continued support of the Sahwa and tribal groups; these groups, in his opinion, are the best lines of defense against terrorism and Iranian influence.

Sanctioning Iran via Iraq

¶5. (C) In terms of imposing existing and future sanctions against Iran, Thamer asked rhetorically if goods that are

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traded between Iraq and Iran fall under the category of sanctioned items, and if so, if it is possible to effectively control the Shi'a and Kurdish controlled border regions.

Al-Maliki still Popular with Kuwaitis

¶6. (C) In an about face from his statements criticizing Iraqi PM Al-Maliki at the March Gulf Security Dialogue (ref A), Thamer lauded the PM, in particular for his crackdown on Shi'a militias, and credited him with changing the mindset of the Arab world, pledging that he now had the support of the GOK.

Kuwait: Money is no object

¶7. (C) Ambassadors Al-Sammak and Al-Muqamis emphasized that on several bilateral issues with Iraq, the GOK has generously offered to fully fund mutually beneficial projects with Iraq, and provided a litany of complaints against the GOI and its lack of responsiveness to Kuwaiti overtures and proposals:

--Bilateral trade. The GOK complained that trade is stifled by poor service on the Iraqi side of the border: hours of operation, from 0600-1300, are not conducive to trade and how trucks are forced to wait in long customs queues. Al-Sammak said that the GOK offered to fund the rebuilding of a customs building and checkpoint but was awaiting the project proposal from the GOI.

--Encroaching farms. An especially sore point with the Kuwaitis--given past Iraqi 'border violations'--is that of Iraqi farmers with property encroaching onto Kuwaiti land. The GOK offered to finance the relocation and building of homes for these farmers, but echoing U/S Al-Jarallah (ref B), Al-Sammak said that the GOK's submitted proposals to the GOI went unanswered, and an Iraqi MFA POC was "nowhere to be found."

--Maintenance of border demarcations. Al-Sammak confirmed that Iraq paid the initial \$500K to establish and install UN

border demarcation pillars, but has since let some of the pillars lapse into disrepair. He added that money has been disbursed to the UN to repair/maintain these markers, but Iraqis have not acted on it and have failed to participate in four separate meetings on the matter.

"Once we get the new ambassador, things will go smoother."

¶8. (C) After hearing the litany of complaints against the GOI, Gray suggested that the presence of a Kuwaiti ambassador in Baghdad would be an asset in navigating such bureaucratic hurdles. On the heels of the July 19 official announcement naming LTG (retired) Ali Al-Mou'min as the Kuwaiti Ambassador-designate to Iraq, the GOK was more upbeat than usual in discussing a diplomatic exchange; Al-Sammak speculated that Al-Mou'min would depart for Iraq in October, "sometime after Ramadan." (Note: Despite the official announcement on July 19, it is widely known that Al-Mou'min has been the Ambassador-designate since 2004. End note.). Gray pushed to see if the typical conditions delaying his actual assignment still applied, such as security, or more recently, the requirement for Baghdad simultaneously to send an ambassador to Kuwait, to which Al-Sammak responded that such preconditions were no longer necessary.

¶9. (U) Embassy Baghdad Senior Advisor Gordon Gray has cleared this cable.

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